ral Gas Commission invited two tenders, one for charter hire of 4 deep drilling rigs and the second lor charter hire of two shallow drilling rig$_s$ from Indian entrepreneurs.

(b) and (c) No. Sir. Quotations were received from 15 Indian firms in respect of the first tender out of which the offer of only 10 firms were found tchnically suitable. Offers from 13 firms were received in respect of the second tender. Their technical bids are under scrutiny.

**Setting up of second digital switching factory**

666. SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any decision for the setting up of the second digital switching factory;

(b) if so, what is the name of the foreign collaborator and where the unit^is to be located; and

(c) what are the numbers and names of private Indian companies which are in the run for setting up of digital switching units?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIR-DHA): (a) and (b) Government had decided in principle to set up the second Switching factory at Bangalore under Indian Telephone Industries, using the same technology as for the first factory at Mankapur. The details are under consideration.

(c) As per the present policy, switching equipment for Public Network can be manufactured in Units with majority Government participation only.

**Gas struck in Arabian Sea**

667. SHRI ADINARAYANA REBDY: Will the Minister of PETRO LEUM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that gas has been struck in the first well drilled on the Arabian Sea;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof and what are the plans for its utilisation; and

(c) by when it is likely to be ready for economic exploration?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM (SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHAR-MA): (a) to (c) The exploration for hydrocarbons is in progress in different basins in the Arabian Sea namely, Kutch-Saurashtra, Bombay High Region and Kerala Konkon. Gas has been struck in South Base in and several other small fields. It is proposed to utilise this gas to meet the feedstock requirement of fertilizer and petro-chemical plants for extraction of LPG and for power generation.

**Production of LPG in the country**

668. SHRI ADINARAYANA REDDY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM be pleased to state:

(a) what are the plans formulated for increasing reduction of L. P. G. in the country during the next three years; and

(b), what i$_s$ the gap between the demand and supply of LPG at present?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM (SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHAR-MA): (a) Th$_e$ Oil Industry has plans to increase LPG production in country from the present level (1984-85)